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CHAPTER X

CHARITABLE WORK OF THE GUILDS

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THE most important charitable agency in China is the family clan. Kulp, Leong and Tao, and many other writers, have described the way in which the dependent members of the guild are looked after by the group. In addition to the activities of the family a great deal of general philanthropic work is being done in the nature of outdoor relief, including direct contributions to beggars and, in the winter, the establishment of *congee* or rice gruel stations where the poor are fed in large numbers. In the towns and cities there are also institutions designed especially for the aged and orphans. Great merit is supposedly acquired by contributors to these institutions. Dr. Y. Y. Tsu, in *The Spirit of Chinese Philanthropy*,[1] has described this type of activity. The large program of charitable work in Peking has been described in great detail by Mr. Gamble.[2]

The charitable work of the government, the records of which extend back to the *Chou Li* or laws of the Chou Dynasty supposed to have been written in 1115 B. C., was largely confined to mass relief in case of famine or disaster too great for local agencies to care for. In clan and family philanthropy there is almost as much interest in the proper burial of the dead as in the care of the living. Not only in the practices of family life, but also in the running of government poorhouses, great importance is attached to the proper supply of coffins. Chief among the benefits to be derived by inmates of an old women's home in Peking, a private charity, is the assurance of worthy burial.

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[1] Doctor's dissertation, Columbia University.

[2] Gamble and Burgess, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-306.

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The philanthropies of the Chinese guilds follow the general pattern of the private philanthropies of the clan and charitable institutions. Morse makes note of the charitable work in the craft and commercial guilds as follows:

> In China it is a matter of pride for well-to-do families to spend large sums on funerals, and customary for friends of the family to send contributions toward the expenses, much in the way that wedding presents are sent in the West; and the fellow-craftsmen of the deceased would be among the first to contribute. For poor members of the gild, contribution would always be made from the gild treasury, usually taking the form of a suitable coffin, and probably also of candles and offerings to the manes of the deceased.[1]

Our study of the Peking guilds shows that although there is little specific explanation regarding recipients of gifts, for the most part the charitable activities of craftsmen and professionals are confined to the needs of their own members. On one matter, however, there is specific statement—that apprentices who die without funds are to be provided with coffins. The presumption is that these philanthropic contributions are given to those whose resources, their own or their family clan's, are insufficient to meet their expenses.

The second principal use of funds is the supplying of Chinese medicine or of free medical aid to members who are ill.[2] Only one guild, the Cloisonné Designers, mentions specifically that they help unemployed members to find work.

A few typical replies will illustrate in greater detail the types of philanthropic activities carried on by the craft and professional guilds. The Cloisonné Designers report that they "provide a cemetery, pay funeral expenses, provide medicine and help workers find jobs." The Mat Tent Build-

[1] Morse, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[2] *Cf.* Table XIII.

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ers say that "the guild has no money to carry on any philanthropic work except in some cases the providing of burial for a member who is cared for by nobody." The Paper Hangers report that "there is a cemetery at Nan Hsia Wa Tze (a location in the Southern City in Peking). In case of the death of a member money is collected to buy a coffin. In case of sickness the member may go to the master's temple for care." He is allowed to live in one of the temples without paying for food or lodging. How much, if any, medical treatment is given is not known. The Actors report that they have "special plays to help raise funds for the medical care of the sick and for the burial of the dead." They also every year just before the New Year give plays, the proceeds from which are distributed in general poor relief. Both the Night Soil Guild and the Electricians Guild report that they "supply special traveling expenses for the sick who have to return home." The only other charitable activities reported by these two types of guilds are the work of the Porters in supplying free tea leaves for the tea houses on the way to *Miao Feng Shan* and a similar service for the pilgrims performed by the Tinkers in connection with the same festival. Their report says, "Every year on the seventh day of the fourth month the members work gratuitously for the pilgrims along the road to Miao Feng Shan." This pilgrimage is described in our discussion of the Porters Guild.[1] Evidently, if the dishes or other utensils carried by the pilgrims on their journey need mending, the Tinkers will do this service for nothing, thereby making both a philanthropic and a religious contribution. In most of the craft and professional guilds temporary free lodgings and board at the guild temple are given to visiting fellow craftsmen who are seeking employment.

In the replies of the commercial group only the Fur Guild reported the possession of a public cemetery; two others co-

[1] *Cf.* pp. 89-90.

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operated in medical relief work. The Dye Stuff Stores send their sick to the *Hsien Wang* Temple to a "special quarter set aside for that purpose, but the expense for medicine must be borne by the patient." The Pork Shops also supply medical relief for their members.

Unlike the craft and professional guilds, the principal philanthropic interest of the commercial guilds is apparently for the outside public rather than for guild members. The Coal Stores give free coal to the poor, while the Rice and Flour Merchants contribute grain for famine relief, and the Restaurant Keepers piously report that whenever any philanthropic institution asks for help the guild will do its best. The Pork and Mutton Shops both report that they spend funds, as a guild, for poor relief, not specifying that the relief is for their own members. The Hotel Keepers, whom we are not including in our list, are contributors to the public *congee* or rice gruel stations and to the general outdoor relief of the cities, as well as to the famine relief fund.

The replies from Foochow and Nanking show a similar, if not a larger, volume of philanthropic work on the part of the commercial guilds there. The philanthropic activities of the Foochow Tea Guild consist in contributing to medical relief, poor relief, and insurance for the poor. The Cloth Guild of Foochow does work along similar lines, while the sole philanthropic activity of the Paper Guild is the running of a fire brigade. The Nanking Flowered Satin Stores Guild wishes it understood that they "extend the same kind of help to members and non-members, which consists in supplying a cemetery for the burial of paupers, general charitable relief for war refugees, and for those who have met with flood or drought. They also supply medical relief, coffins for paupers, wadded clothes for the poor, and distribute free tea, presumably to beggars." The informant, however, is careful to add that the guild carries on these

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measures not in an active but in a "passive manner," presumably meaning that the guild contributes when asked, but does not actively engage in promoting philanthropy.

It is evident from the above description that in so far as present activities are concerned, outside of fraternal offices to the unfortunate, the Peking guilds confine themselves in general to a limited amount of poor relief. At present at least not much is done for the public welfare. It may be that formerly the guilds took a more active part. If such were the case, the diminution of public activities would easily be explained by the present limited economic resources of the guilds and by the fact that not only is private relief increasing in Peking in recent years by leaps and bounds, but also since the founding of the Republic (in 1912), the police department—the organization of the local government that is closest to the people—has taken a very active part in relief measures both of an institutional and an outdoor nature.[1]

TABLE XIII

CHARITABLE WORK OF THE GUILDS [a]

	Craft	Commercial	Professional
A. *For members*			
Public cemeteries	7	1	1
Funeral expenses, coffins, etc.	6		3
Medical help	3	2	2
Employment	1		
B. *For the public*			
Poor relief, including giving of coal, grain, or funds for famine relief		5	
Help for pilgrims	1		1
C. *Guilds reporting "No Charity"*	1	6	3
D. *No report*	3	5	1

[a] Under A and B all activities enumerated by any guild are counted as units. The figures under C and D represent the numbers of guilds either reporting "no charity" or giving no report

[1] Gamble and Burgess, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-306.